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NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER TAKES KEY POLICY ROLE

BY BARRY SCHWEID

Stepping out of the shadows of his inexperience, conservative National Security adviser William Clark is emerging as the key formulator of the Reagan administration's foreign policy.

The former California judge, a quiet man who has known President Reagan longer than any of his other principal advisers, has undertaken increasing responsibility for relations with the Soviet Union as well as U.S. policy in Central America and in the Middle East.

As Clark's power grows, the influence of Secretary of State George Shultz recedes. But if there is significant personal friction between the two, it is a well-kept secret. A White House official who refused to be named commented, "Usually, people with problems don't communicate." He said Clark and Shultz talk about a dozen times a day.

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Clark, a college dropout with no academic expertise, is instinctively conservative in his world views, and therefore comfortable working for Reagan. Unlike Kissinger and Brzezinski, he lacked a global background for his critical job and was uninterested in foreign affairs when Reagan summoned him to Washington in 1981 to be deputy secretary of state.

Clark was so uninformed he was unable to define detente at his Senate confirmation hearings. His value to Reagan lies elsewhere _ in his unquestioned commitment to the president and his administrative skill.

Their relationship is close, and Clark talks with the president eight to 10 times a day, usually in person. Both prefer meeting face-to-face to conferring over the telephone.

The sessions can be as brief as two minutes. Reagan and Clark have lunch together regularly, about twice a week.

Clark is at his desk at 6:30 a.m. He works in an office adorned with a large photograph of Reagan, Clark and Clark's father, William, on horseback, and Western paraphernalia that gives the room a cowboy flavor.

Before briefing Reagan at 9:30 a.m., Clark talks by phone with Shultz, Weinberger and CIA Director William Casey. He talks with Shultz about a dozen times a day.

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